

NSC BRIEFING

28 January 1959

FRANCE-NORTH AFRICA

- I. Mounting pressures on De Gaulle to reach early Algerian solution probably responsible for reported new French soundings of rebel leaders.
- A. Economically, De Gaulle's austerity program will be jeopardized if war drain lasts much longer.
- B. Militarily, tying up of bulk of French combat forces in Algeria blocks ambitious reorganization of defense forces De Gaulle contemplates for nuclear age.
- C. Politically, time to achieve liberal solution is fast running out.
1. As matters now stand, ^{spring} ~~March~~ municipal elections in Algeria offer last real chance of producing Moslem officials more representative of masses than National Assembly deputies handpicked last November by army and settlers.
- a. Number of posts to be filled (about 15,000) enormously multiplies difficulties of finding enough Moslem candidates willing to risk rebel reprisals.
- ~~b. Postponement of elections would look bad politically and imply no hope of early end of economic and military burden of war.~~
2. In ^{French} Assembly session ^{which} to begin in April, two largest parties, Independents--explicitly--and Union for New Republic, implicitly--despite its "Gaullist" label--are committed to integration.

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3. Finance Minister Pinay (Independent leader) doubts De Gaulle realizes Assembly will not back a liberal solution.
4. French press becoming critical of unjustified official optimism about military situation in Algeria.

II. De Gaulle, however, reported to feel French public would back him in referendum on liberal solution--such as offering Algeria membership in French community--if he encounters strong opposition in Assembly, army, or among settlers in Algeria.

- A. Since community membership implies ultimate right to opt for independence, army would probably insist on long membership period in which to work to convince Algerians to keep ties with France.
- B. Rebel leaders--particularly moderates like Ferhat Abbas--likely to approve offer setting up Algerian government which could ultimately choose independence.

1. Rebels, however, suspicious of De Gaulle motives in releasing *Ferhat Abbas'* rival nationalist Messali Hadj who now permitted to engage in political activity.

2. As pressure technique, terrorism inside Algeria was stepped up sharply this months.

III. In Morocco, where tribal dissidence continues, military command headquarters--under personal direction of inexperienced Crown Prince--have moved from Tetuan to Fez.

- A. This move in order to handle Berber tribal unrest in areas south of Fez.
- B. Army will probably also continue some operations in Rif north of Fez.

C. Friction inside Istiqlal Party came to head over weekend. Several left-wing leaders expelled. Armed clashes may occur between partisans of left wing and the old guard faction, who now control party.

IV. In Tunisia, President Bourguiba seems determined to use recent franc devaluation in Paris as excuse to cut Tunisia's economic ties with France.

A. Bourguiba has asked US to peg dinar to dollar and for assistance in redirecting Tunisia's foreign trade outside franc zone.

1. Such an operation will require major readjustment. In first 9 months 1958, 65% of Tunisia's trade was with metropolitan France; another 5% with other franc zone areas.